

The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, October 12. 1695.

Quest. 1. **I** Have heard very strange stories of the different effects of poison, as that some poisons have been of such a nature as to continue in the body of a man unperceived for some months, nay years, before it proves mortal, and of other poisons so strong that they will certainly kill a person in a quarter of an hour tho taken but in a small quantity; I desire to know whether there are such sorts of poison, or not, and if it was ever experimented?

Ans. Without doubt there is, as has been too often found; for the more dilatory way, there have been some Germans and Italians who have understood it very well, and put it sometimes in practice too. Not many years ago in France there was one of 'em employ'd by a young Lady who had a mind to send her friends the nearest way to Heaven, that she might possess their estates. They took their time to effect this project, and in about four or five years she that at first was worth little or nothing became vastly rich, through the death of her relations, having removed all of them by this diabolical art, as she saw convenient, without any suspicion. And being encouraged by the success, she proceeded by degrees to take away all her enemies; but at last by an accident, as the miscarriage of a Letter, or some such thing, they were discovered, and he took such a dose of his own preparation as soon put him out of the power of the law, but she received publick justice. The Indians have also this Art to perfection. Tho in Nubia we believe they have the strongest of all poisons; there is such a one found, that only one grain of it will kill ten men in a quarter of an hour, and if one man takes a grain of it he will dye in a moment. The inhabitants set a great value on it, as appears by the price, for they won't sell it under an hundred ducats an ounce, and when they part with it to strangers they make them take an oath that they will never make use of it in their Country.

Quest. 2. In the fifth chapter of Numbers where the water of Jealousy is spoken of, this verse, then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity, seems to me to intimate that the tryal concerned the innocency of the man, as well as that of the woman. If not, why should there be these express words, then shall the man be guiltless?

Ans. The opinion of the Jews about it, is very probable; they from these words concluded that the water would not try, nor have any effect upon the suspected woman, if her husband were not innocent himself when he brought her to this tryal.

Quest. 3. There is a young Lady (who is under the Government of a designing, niggardly, griping mother) she is of a good fortune and very beautiful; she has been Court-ed by several Gentlemen five times her equals in fortune, but her mothers ordinary guise is to say, the estate is remote, or else to discredit the reputation or person, so with this tale of a tub she puts her off without looking any farther, having enured her with some force, and a great deal of flattery to this dutifulness.

Qu. 1. Whether it is not highly probable, her mother does this to make a hand of her?

Qu. 2. This premised, how far she is bound in duty to obey?

Ans. 1. Prejudice so often prevails in the Judgments we make of other persons actions, that 'tis difficult to discover the true motives of 'em. Yet in this case, if the mother has several times refused marrying her daughter, when she could have done it to her advantage, it won't admit of a very good Construction; and it may be reasonably feared she does not intend her good.

Ans. 2. Tho a child is in duty obliged to consult

the will of a parent, yet it is also required that the parent endeavour to promote the true happiness of the child, and not obstinately refuse to consent to any thing that may be very advantageous to it. If this young Lady is as well satisfied in all respects with continuing single, as with a married life, and has enough in case her mother dyes to secure her from the probable accidents of fortune, and contempts of the world, we think she'll do very well to bear with this frailty in her mother. But if not, that she may very lawfully accept of the next good offer, only out of respect to her mother staying some time, to see if she can gain her consent.

Quest. 4. Why doth almost every man both old and young if he overtakes a woman (especially if she be fine clothed) look earnestly into her face?

Ans. Partly through the natural propensity he has to the fair sex; and partly out of curiosity.

Quest. 5. What is that really, which many people Imaginarily fancy to be a Death-Watch.

Ans. Only a worm in the wall: And the reason it is called a Death-Watch, is because it makes a noise just like a watch, and is reported to come into an house only to foretell the immediate death of some person in it: For which we see no more reason than for several other such like foolish omens.

Quest. 6. After what manner do the people in Barbary live, are they governed by any laws or customs like ours, or do they live independant without regard to one another, and what sort of worship generally have they?

Ans. The greatest part of the Moors amongst 'em are Corsairs, who believe it lawful to live by piracy, and build Mosques wherein they make vows to Heaven, and pray for their success in the taking of happy prizes. These people have some good customs which the Europeans have not. How much soever they may be transported with passion, they never swear, nor murmur against God, or Heaven. It is affirmed by some who pretend to know very well, that in the Arabian, Turkish and African languages, which are used by them, that there is no words fitted for such expressions. If they surprize any Renegade swearing in his own language, they punish him severely. There is never so much as one assassination, or murder heard of amongst them; and how high soever their quarrels may arise, they never come to blows. It is true as they are very ignorant, so they are ridiculously superstitious. They have particularly a very pleasant way of curing the pain in the head, and delivering women with child. If any ones head akes, their manner is to take a lamb, or a young kid, and to beat it as long as it can stand, and when it falls to the ground they imagine the pain will pass from theirs to the head of the Animal. Their method of helping women in labour is not less comical, as soon as a woman falls ill they send for the children from School, and give them a sheet to hold at the four corners, into which they put an hens Egg, and then the children are sent out into the streets singing certain prayers; and whosoever hears these songs run immediately, and fling full pails of water into the middle of the sheet, directly upon the Egg, and they believe that through the power of sympathy, this effusion of water, causes the woman to be delivered.

The Religion chiefly profest among them is Mahometanism. These generally bury their dead, (tho in some parts they burn them) and place but one of them in one tomb, for which they give this reason, that they may be so much the readier to appear in the day of Judgment, and not loose time in seeking their bones. They differ something from the other Mahometans, they look upon the Doctrine of Aliomar, and the other

other interpreters of the law, as humane traditions; they receive none but the writings of *Esfurcan* as faithful commentaries of their law. This change of their doctrine was effected by *Hamer*, who was the author of the *schism*, and who by his seditious preaching found the way, from the condition of a poor *Monk*, to establish himself in that of a powerful King. Tho other *Mahometans* forbid all persons (who are of a contrary religion) on pain of death to enter their *Mosques*, or Temples; yet these permit all sorts of men, as well *Jews* as *Christians*, to frequent their sermons and to assist in the ceremonies of their religion. Since this separation these dissenting *Mahometans* so much hate the rest, that if they take any of 'em slaves, they treat them with as much rigour as they do the *Christians*. Yet in some places there are very reasonable persons amongst them, as the manner of receiving any one into their religion, in the province of *Tedley* evidences; which is as follows; when any *Christian* would *Apostatize*, custom obliges him to advertise his brethren of it; after which a place is assigned, where an equal number of *Mahometans* and *Christians* meet, and he who has a mind to change his religion is placed in the midst; the *Christians* are permitted to give him what reasons they can to oblige him to keep firm; after which he may renounce his faith, or continue to make a profession of it as he pleases. Those who have a mind to have a larger account of these stories may read what *Dapper* says of them.

Quest. 7. What was the respective offices of the Priests and Levites?

Ans. The holy function of the Priests consisted chiefly in these two things, in blessing the people, and in ministring in holy things, and performing divine offices. As *Moses* in *Deut.* Speaking to the *Israelites* of the Priests, says, *Them the Lord thy God has chosen to Minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord*; And in another place *Aaron* is said to be separated that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him and to bless in his name. Strictly speaking, the Priest was the peoples advocate with God, and the ministry required of *Aarons* sons was various. It Generally related either to the Altar of incense, within the veil, here they were obliged to offer up incense, this was the most holy place, where the high Priest only was allowed to enter, but from that place to the brazen Altar the inferiour Priests might enter. Their office also related to the Alter of burnt offering without, wherein they were obliged to sprinkle the blood, as in *Leviticus* they were commanded to do; by the door of the Tabernacle; to put fire and wood on the Altar. The people being forbid to approach the Altar to Minister, tho they were permitted to carry it in the Wilderness. To burn the parts; To remove the Ashes, and the Priest having put on his vestments, shall take up the ashes which the fire has consumed with the burnt offering, or when the fire has consumed the burnt offering. *Lev. 6. 10.* And to offer the memorial of the meat offering. 'Twas likewise a part of their employment to light the Lamps; To blow the Trumpets, to Judge of the Leprosy; And to order and dispose the fire upon the Altar which was never quite extinguished. It was also the work of several of 'em to gather, (as seems to be intimated by the word *Priests* *Lev. 1. 8.*) To lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood, or fire, which was on the Altar.

The work and office of the Levites, was to Minister to the Priests, *Num. 3.* Bring the Tribe of *Levi* near, and present them before *Aaron* the Priest, that they may minister unto him. To serve at the Tabernacle, as appears, by their being commanded to keep the charge of the whole congregation, and hereina they served the people, *2 Chr. 35. 3.* *Josiah* said unto the Levites who taught all *Israel*, &c. *Levi's* three sons *Gershon*, *Kobath* and *Merari*, had each a particular charge. The *Gershonites* were to take care of the Tabernacle, the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, and the hangings of

the Court, &c. *Lev. 3. 26, 27.* The *Kohalites* had the Ark under their charge, the Table, Candlestick, the Altars, and the Vessels of the Sanctuary, &c. *v. 31.* And under the *Merarites* was the charge of the Boards of the Tabernacle, the bars, and pillars thereof, &c. The sons of *Kobath* was to carry the sanctuary, and all which belonged to it; till after the Temple was built, when they were excused from it; but then they were appointed to be singers in, and porters at the several gates of the Temple. They had the charge of the treasure of the house of God, and of those things which were dedicated. And in *Dauids* time, they were some of them made Officers and Judges in the business of the Lord, and service of the King, *Chr. 1. 26, 30.*

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